

2013 Session Wraps Up in Albany With Major Win



Vice President Eric Ooms and Public Policy Director Julie Suarez held a press event in Albany, targeting the sometimes jaded Albany press corps. Pictured above from left to right are Saratoga County Farm Bureau member and sod farmer Laurie Griffin, Vice President Ooms, Assemblymembers Hawley and Blankenbush, Policy Director Julie Suarez, Assemblymembers Skoufis, Assembly Agriculture Committee Chair Magee, Assemblymen Palmesano, Lopez, and Santabarbara.

By Julie Suarez
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The tumultuous, controversial 2013 Legislative Session has thankfully wrapped up, and despite many close calls on issues ranging from the perennial farm labor battle, biotech labeling mandates, and proposed animal welfare restrictions, the session was largely a good one for New York

farmers.

Several issues that first surfaced in Governor Cuomo's agriculturally themed summits were passed by the state Legislature, notably the new farm cidery license category, a fee reduction for small batch farm distillers using locally grown products, a real property tax clarification for manure digesters and additional on-farm net metering changes.

These positive changes will help farmers in various sectors of the agricultural community move forward. Additional bills expanding the Pride of New York program to include a "Shop Pride of New York" and "Dine Pride of New York" will help fold in the grocery store and restaurant communities into usage of the Pride of New York logo, potentially opening up some new marketing and

promotional opportunities for New York growers. For the soil and water conservation districts, important legislation was advanced that allows the districts to hold farmland easements, an important tool for farmland protection in more rural areas of the state without existing land trusts.

But the most important victory for New York Farm Bureau's members has to be the exciting passage by the state Assembly, unanimously, of legislation that caps the agricultural valuation rate at 2%. In a show of strong bipartisan support from both downstate and upstate, Assemblymembers voted "aye" while New York Farm Bureau's Public Policy staff were cheering. The State Senate, following a successful lobby day on this issue in March by over 300 farmer members, and a news conference with the Senate Majority and Independent Democratic conference, had already passed the legislation. Bear in mind, this does not mean that this bill will become law. The Governor still has to sign the legislation, and New York farmers will need to make a concerted push to overcome opposition.

At a press conference

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Passion & Perseverance Pay Off for Organic Farmer

By Steve Ammerman
sammerman@nyfb.org

For many farmers, tending to the land is a natural way of life, with the farmland being passed down from one generation to the next. But for a growing number of people, they are just discovering they were meant to be farmers. That certainly happened to Pam McSweeney. She grew up in South Jersey and worked as a nutritionist in downstate New York only to one day move her 3 kids north to Westerlo, NY where she purchased a farmstead that hadn't seen much farming for more than 60 years.

"I searched online and just fell in love with the place and something called out to me about it," said McSweeney.

Granted it was something that had been building up inside her. As part of her previous career, she was becoming increasingly aware of the importance of local food as well as seeing farms lost to development.

"I put those two interests

together and wanted to do something about it," she said.

Doing something about it meant starting her certified organic farm on more than 200 acres of land. It's called Eight Mile Creek Farm, named after the long waterway that runs around her property. Since 2005, she has restored the barn, built a couple of greenhouses, planted two large vegetable gardens and is raising a menagerie of farm animals and birds. They include 55 beef cattle who feed on grassy pastures that they rotate through on a regular basis. Much of her food is sold through her CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) or at nearby farmers' markets. It was her ultimate goal to return the land back to a diversified family farm.

"My big risk management is the diversity. You may have a year like the year of the blight where I lost my tomato crop but my greens did fantastic, the pastures grew tremendously and my cows grazed until November.



Cows in the pasture on 8 Mile Creek Farm

It is that diversity that keeps me going," she said. "Every year there are different obstacles but having that diversity, if one thing doesn't do well something else will."

She learned how to do it all through a lot of reading and kind assistance from other farmers nearby.

"The agricultural community is made up of some of the nicest people I have ever met in my life. One local farmer helped me castrate my first cow. They are a great bunch of people in the community and I feel very lucky I got to know these people," she

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NYFB Leads Breakthrough in Wine Trail Expansion

By: Steve Ammerman
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The cup runneth over for New York's wineries that continue to see their contributions to the state's economy recognized at the Capitol in Albany. The State Legislature passed legislation that will expand the existing Niagara and Shawangunk Wine Trails to include additional wineries, and create the new Adirondack Coast Wine Trail.

Wine trails provide great cross promotional opportunities for the growing number of wineries opening their doors. New York is the third largest grape producer in the nation, with around 1,400 grape farmers and more than 315 wineries, and is the second largest producer of wine. Wine and grape farms draw nearly 5 million visitors annually year with an economic benefit of \$3.76 billion, said the New York State Wine and Grape Foundation.

"Award winning vineyards and wineries have become a strong part of the agricultural community. Wine trails are good for both new and existing wineries, but also other farms and small businesses who will capitalize on the increased tourism. I thank the local legislators who worked tirelessly to pass these bills, and especially Governor Cuomo's strong leadership in directing the DOT to work with the wine trails to establish appropriate routes," said Dean Norton, President of NYFB.

It was the Governor's efforts to connect the DOT with lawmakers and farmers, at the urging of NYFB, that finally saw these bills break through after being held up for the past few years. DOT sat

down with NYFB, the Wine and Grape Foundation, and wine trail representatives. The discussion was fruitful, with resolution to issues about signage clutter in scenic byways and other technical issues incorporated into amendments to the bills.

"This effort demonstrated the

Maziarz, Sen. Betty Little, and Sen. Bill Larkin in the Senate. In the Assembly, Assemblyman Robin Schimminger, Assemblywoman Janet Duprey and Assemblyman James Skoufis were instrumental.

"The passage of wine trail legislation is a classic win-win situation. Wine Trails, as major

has been a longtime advocate on the Niagara Wine Trail expansion. "Both as a wine trail and as individual wineries, we have brochures; we advertise; we hold special events. However, without our road signage, we would not be as successful. Even in this world of smart phones and GPS, people still look at the scenery. Seeing that familiar green grape sign with an arrow brings many people right to our doors," said Bittner. "That is why I am so excited about the passage of this legislation. With NYS DOT's willingness to help us with sign placement, we are confident that both tourists and residents will have an easier time finding the wineries. As a result, our businesses can thrive, which in turn helps our local and state economy."

It is also exciting for the vineyards in the North Country who will see the wine trail in that part of the state.

"The wine trail designation is transformational for the budding Adirondack Coast wine region. Rural wineries do not have city populations to draw upon, so the wine trail designation and its signage allows our vineyards to be noticed by tourists travelling through our region. I sincerely believe we will discover that the Adirondack Coast Wine Trail designation will be the best thing that has ever happened to our young grape growing region," said Colin Read, a regional economist who co-owns the Champlain Wine Company and the North Star Vineyard with Natalie Peck.




Margo Sue Bittner and her daughter, Janet Walker, relax on the front porch of Marjim Winery celebrating the recent expansion of the Niagara Wine trails.

value of member involvement in Farm Bureau and how this organization can play a role in facilitating valuable connections between the regulated community and the regulators," said Julie Suarez, NYFB Public Policy Director. "Going forward this positive relationship with DOT bodes well for additional growth of wine trails."

There were several sponsors the Assembly and Senate who were strong advocates for their districts' grape growers and wine makers. They include Sen. George

tourist destinations, are economic engines in the rural regions of our state, fueling other tourist-related businesses. In addition, both the State and counties benefit directly from the additional sales tax generated by wine country tourists. We are very grateful to our partners at New York Farm Bureau for working on this legislation, and to Governor Cuomo and the Legislature for making it happen," said Jim Trezise, President, New York Wine & Grape Foundation.

Margo Sue Bittner, who owns the Winery and Marjim Manor,



"My partners and I let Farm Credit East handle our record-keeping."

Dan Osborn


"As co-owner and manager of three farms, Dan Osborn needs reliable financial records to make sound business decisions. However, managing three farm businesses doesn't allow Dan and his partners the time to regularly reconcile records and prepare weekly payroll. For those tasks, they turn to Farm Credit East. We keep their records up-to-date and accurate, and with our CenterPoint software, they always have access to key financial reports to make strategic choices."

Jamie Purdy



Dan Osborn
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Investigation Ongoing into GMO Wheat Discovery

The USDA continues to look into the mystery surrounding the discovery of a small number of volunteer wheat plants in Oregon that had tested positive for genetically modified (GMO) glyphosate-resistant wheat. Extensive testing confirmed that Monsanto developed the wheat as a variety of MON71800.

USDA began an investigation into this matter on May 3 when an Oregon State University scientist notified USDA's officials that plant samples they had tested came up positive for a protein that made them resistant to glyphosate.

As of last week, government officials had neither found nor been informed of anything that would indicate that this incident amounts to more than a single isolated incident in a single field on a single farm. All information collected so far shows no indication of the presence of GMO wheat in commerce.

The USDA says its investigators are conducting a thorough

review. They have interviewed the person that harvested the wheat from this field as well as the seed supplier who sold the producer wheat seed; obtained samples of the wheat seed sold to the producer and other growers; and obtained samples of the producer's wheat harvests, including a sample of the producer's 2012 harvest. All of these samples of seed and grain tested negative for the presence of GMO material. Investigators are continuing to conduct interviews with approximately 200 area growers.

As part of its statement, the Department of Agriculture said the detection of this wheat variety does not pose a public health or food safety concern. Monsanto worked with the Food and Drug Administration in 2004 to complete a voluntary food and feed safety consultation. Completion of the FDA consultation process means this variety is as safe as non-GMO wheat currently on the market. There are no bioengineered wheat varieties approved

for sale or in commercial production in the United States or elsewhere at this time.

As of press time, major markets, such as Japan, Korea and Taiwan, have postponed imports of U.S. white wheat as they continue to study information from U.S. officials to determine what, if any, future action may be required. USDA officials have said that they will continue to provide information as quickly as possible as the investigation continues - with a top priority on giving U.S. trading partners the tools they need to ensure science-based trade decisions.

The incident has raised some concerns and has brought about at least one lawsuit from a farmer in southwest Kansas who accuses Monsanto of gross negligence for not containing the experimental genetically engineered wheat and putting U.S. wheat export sales at risk.

The lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in Wichita, Kansas. The farmer, Ernest

Barnes, alleges that he and other wheat farmers have been hurt financially by the discovery.

In a statement, Monsanto's executive vice president and general counsel, David Snively said, "Tractor-chasing lawyers have prematurely filed suit without any evidence of fault and in advance of the crop's harvest."

Meanwhile, Monsanto says its process for closing out the Roundup Ready wheat program nine years ago was rigorous, well-documented and audited. The company added that its own internal investigation has confirmed that it did not have any prior test site at the location where the material under investigation was reported to have been present.

"We're committed to being transparent about our investigation and sharing information as it is assembled," said Claire Cajacob, Monsanto's wheat research lead. "We're prepared to provide any technical help that we can to get to the bottom of this."

Farm Bill Fails in House

By M. Kelly Young
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As you are no doubt aware by now, the five-year Farm Bill (H.R. 1947) failed in the House of Representatives by a 195-234 vote. The Republican tally in favor of the bill was 171-62 and the Democratic tally was 24-172. The vote was anticipated to be close, with some Democrats needed to join the Republicans for passage, but in the end support from both parties disintegrated unexpectedly. The fact that the Farm Bill failed on the floor of the House, after 40 years of broad support in final passage, demonstrates both the toxic atmosphere in Washington and the controversial nature of the nutrition and human services type provisions in the Farm Bill.

Those who voted against the bill did so for vastly different reasons. The 62 Republicans, more than a quarter of the caucus, largely felt that the \$20.5 billion (over 10 years) in cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) were not deep enough, while most Democrats felt these cuts were too severe.

One amendment just before the final vote on the bill was particularly onerous to Democrats; it applied federal

welfare work requirements to SNAP at a state's option. The adoption of this amendment from Rep. Steve Southerland (R-Fla.) and supported by Majority Leader Eric Cantor reportedly caused several planning to support the bill to reverse their vote. This was the last straw for some Democrats who were planning on voting for the bill because it represented a compromise and was helpful to the farm community, despite the concerns over the SNAP cuts.

On the agricultural side, the House did approve the Goodlatte-Scott dairy amendment to remove supply management from the proposed margin insurance program. The vote was 291-135 and several lawmakers claimed this provision prevented their vote in favor of the final bill. NYFB was neutral on this amendment.

The Farm Bill defeat was crushing considering the bi-partisan vote in the Agriculture Committee, and all the work that had been done by our own New York House Agriculture Committee members Congressman Gibson, Collins, and Maloney, as well as Congressman Owens in the last Congress.

Ironically, the most controversial pieces of the Farm Bill at the beginning

of this protracted debate two years ago - direct payments and SNAP - remain unchanged until a Farm Bill is completed. Direct payments, which the agriculture community widely agreed to discontinue in favor of margin insurance and better specialty crop insurance tools, remain intact. SNAP remains the same until a new Farm Bill. Disappointingly so, the new dairy safety net to replace the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) Program and hard-fought new crop insurance provisions will be further delayed without a bill.

At press time it was still unclear how House leadership would move forward. The current Farm Bill expires on Sept. 30 and farmers could be faced with great uncertainty if lawmakers in the House cannot find a clear path forward to actually pass a bill, and then go to conference with the Senate.

NYFB will be working closely with our Congressional delegation to encourage the House to pass a full five-year bill in a timely manner so farmers are not left with the insecurity of an expired Farm Bill. NYFB will continue to communicate with members and encourage you to E-Lobby on this issue at www.nyfb.org.

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NEW YORK AGRICULTURE

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I hereby make application for a one year membership in the _____ County Farm Bureau and New York Farm Bureau (which is a member of American Farm Bureau Federation), the purpose of which is to promote, protect, and represent the economic, social, and educational interests of New York's farmers, as well as encourage the protection of agricultural areas and rural interests within the state. I am interested in promoting these objectives through membership. I understand acceptance or denial and classification of my membership are determined by the county Farm Bureau.

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Annual renewal dues may vary by county but are \$75 per year for new memberships with this application (\$90 for Long Island and NYC). Contributions, gifts, or membership dues to N.Y. Farm Bureau, a county Farm Bureau, or the N.Y. Farm Bureau Legal Defense Fund are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. However, they may be tax-deductible under other provisions of the Internal Revenue Code. Membership dues are not refundable.

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Grassroots

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On Page One:

Alpacas enjoy the sunshine at The Alpaca Shack. Send a photo of yours to info@nyfb.org and you might see it in a future issue!

The President's Message

What's in a Word?

Life these days seems to be getting more and more extreme. With the failure of the Farm Bill in the House of Representatives generating a ton of political rhetoric, and activist Kerry Kennedy claiming that corporate farms are mistreating employees, it can start to get a little discouraging. When your primary mission in life is to get up and do what it takes to grow food, the extremist labels that are thrown around these days can be more than a little disheartening.



Dean Norton
NYFB President

Factory Farms. Corporate Farms. Big Ag. Industrial Farming. We've all heard the words, either posted on various social media networks, expounded upon by various radio and tv personalities as if they know what it's like to get up at 4:00 a.m. in the winter to start chores, or thrown around irresponsibly by politicians seeking to score points. These words are intended to scare consumers into believing whatever the trendy issue of the day is regarding food – animal welfare, labor, or technology in farming.

Sustainable Farms. Family Farms. Locally Grown. Responsibly Harvested. The converse is of course also true. All of these words are targeted right back at that same consumer, designed to hopefully promote a positive image of agriculture and reassurance about the safety and production methods of our food.

So what is in a word these days? How do we define these terms and most importantly, how do we make connections to consumers, and to our neighbors? Venues like the Foundation for New York Agriculture's work with school kids, or your local county Farm Bureau Promotion and Education Committee are great places to start. Farmer volunteers are always needed

as agricultural communicators to battle the extremist words.

Food is a big business these days. Anyone who's ever seen that infamous Chipotle commercial knows just how infuriating it can be to watch a multinational chain market their food as somehow better because it doesn't come from a factory farm....whatever that word actually means. There is an epidemic of revisionist history these days that no longer embraces the efficiencies we've developed in farming, and at frequently low margins of return. Instead, the new politics of food and farming history pulls our accomplishments into a narrative of bad industrialization of agriculture that is devastating communities and causing obesity.

This is more than a little ironic given the freedom that our efficiencies in farming through technology have given to city dwellers. After all, if it weren't for our farms – family owned, sustainable, corporate, and of necessity industrially efficient – all those Wall Street types would have a lot less free time to post weird theories on social networks as they'd have to be busy growing food.

But that's what we know, on the farm. For the rest of the public, the extreme dialogue is becoming confusing. I can see why the average person doesn't know who to trust. So we have to re-double our own efforts to communicate to our neighbors, both those right next door to our farm and those surfing the internet. There are lots of great opportunities that Farm Bureau provides at the national, state, and local level to engage, and it's time for us to do so or risk the negative words winning the battle.

In the meantime, I'd also ask that you take some time in the busy farming season to enjoy the local farm products. From our thriving and always popular wine trails, cheese trails and agritourism activities at our great fruit and vegetable farms, our family farms have a lot to offer this time of year. Melanie and I both extend our hopes for a great farming season, as well as some time for family fun in the summer.

View From Washington

Farm Bureau, Full Speed Ahead

Baseball legend Yogi Berra once said that if you don't know where you're going, you'll end up someplace else. While this seems completely logical, I'm always surprised at how many organizations don't have a strategic plan to achieve their goals.

At a time of Washington gridlock, when not much of anything is being resolved, Farm Bureau is not only seeing action on three of its policy priorities, we are setting the course. We are being proactive and strategic in recognizing and making the most of opportunities to move our policy agenda forward. The American Farm Bureau has set its policy goals and a plan of attack and we are now moving full speed ahead.



Bob Stallman
AFBF President

All Hands

The Senate's passage of the Water Resources Development Act in May was another major milestone on the American Farm Bureau's policy agenda. About four years overdue for reautho-

rization, WRDA, which focuses on upgrading waterway shipping infrastructure such as locks and dams, is finally on the move in Congress. Having an efficient and reliable inland waterway system in addition to competitive ports are vital to America's ability to provide affordable agricultural products domestically and to compete internationally.

Again, because of politics as usual, things are expected to be more challenging on the House side. Farm Bureau members will need to urge their members of Congress to rise above politics and support U.S. agriculture's global competitiveness. To those representatives from states that don't border the Mississippi River, its tributaries or other inland waterways, we'll need to remind them that more than 60 percent of our grain exports move on our inland waterways system.

Politics in Washington has always focused as much on who is up and who is down as it has on the details and content of actual policy. I believe the action so far on Farm Bureau's issues shows that our new strategic way of representing our farm and ranch members clearly has us on the rise. While many only throw up their hands in despair against the stiff breeze of political gridlock, we adjust our sail, and powered by the force of our grassroots strength, we move deliberately toward our policy goals.

Guest Opinions

Freshman Legislators Weigh In On Their First Year On Assembly Ag Committee



Assemblyman Steve Otis
Assembly District 91 - Westchester

What has your time been like serving on the Assembly Agriculture Committee?

It has been important to learn of the financial challenges facing farmers in today's economy and to be an advocate for state efforts to help.

What is your top priority while on the Ag. Committee?

I am eager to help the farming industry in New York State succeed and support efforts to promote economic models that make that happen. I endorse efforts to adjust tax policy to keep farmland used for farming and to promote New York State grown products.

How can urban and rural lawmakers find common ground on farm and food issues?

Governor Cuomo has made a major effort to promote upstate New York agriculture in New York City and suburban areas and find ways for state government to help.

What have you learned about agriculture in this state that you may not have known before this year?

Bill Magee does a great job as Agriculture Committee Chair, addressing issues affecting the farming industry through the bills placed on the agenda and the speakers he brings in.

I have a sister-in-law who owns Lake Placid Spirits producing vodka and gin in Lake Placid using ingredients from the Adirondacks. Their potato-based vodka, 46 Peaks, uses potatoes from a local farm, while another product uses local cranberries.

How would you encourage the farming community to reach out to your constituents who may not know much about where their food comes from?

In Westchester, we are fortunate to have a number of Farmers Markets where upstate farmers bring their produce and other New York goods into our communities. The broader farm to table movement has also encouraged consumers to think about where their food comes from and to support local farmers.

How would you characterize your first year in the Assembly?

I am very pleased that 2013 saw increased efforts to promote and market locally grown farm products and new initiatives to help promote farm products through New York's Tourism program.



Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara
Assembly District 111 - Rotterdam

What has your time been like serving on the Assembly Agriculture Committee?

It has been a great experience. I have visited many farms and being able to address their concerns on to the committee on their behalf has been great.

What is your top priority while on the Ag. Committee?

The main thing is that we are making it easier for the farming industry to operate and do business in New York State. Agriculture is so important to New York and so we have to make sure that we are helping them succeed.

How can urban and rural lawmakers find common ground on farm and food issues?

I think its a matter of educating and letting people know how important the industry is. I really think a lot of people don't know or don't realize. We have to get the information out there, into the grocery store and what goes into getting this food from farms to the table.

What have you learned about agriculture in this state that you may not have known before this year?

Just mostly issues that are specific to family farms. Things like the agricultural assessment that we would not normally hear or think about otherwise. Transportation law is not necessarily something you would think is important to farmers until you hear some of their issues that in fact do relate to it. It has been a learning experience.

How would you encourage the farming community to reach out to your constituents who may not know much about where their food comes from?

One of the things that we have talked about is that if you have a farm, invite your legislators to come take a tour. Invite them to see how you operate and let them know about the details and issues that you deal with every day that other people might not know about.

How would you characterize your first year in the Assembly?

It has been an eventful year. I'm happy that I am on the ag committee so that I can help represent my district as well as I can. Its interested to see how many ag bills do come through. It was also good to learn about other districts and the problems they might have and see if they can help my district.



Assemblyman Luis Sepulveda
Assembly District 87 - Bronx

What has your time been like serving on the Assembly Agriculture Committee?

Extremely edifying. As a native of New York City, I haven't been as exposed to agriculture in comparison to my upstate colleagues. It's been an educational journey, thus far.

What is your top priority while on the Ag. Committee?

To learn. While my experience in dealing with agriculture is virtually nil, I realize how important it is as an industry to the economy of New York, and to the health of its residents.

How can urban and rural lawmakers find common ground on farm and food issues?

Keeping the lines of communication open, always. I believe this leads to coming to an understanding that the relationship is interwoven into the well-being of our state as a whole. An example being upstate farmers having access to downstate consumers and lines of credit from the financial sector.

What have you learned about agriculture in this state that you may not have known before this year?

How expansive the scale of it is. I came across a statistic that some 7 million acres are utilized by over 30,000 farmers. Astounding.

How would you encourage the farming community to reach out to your constituents who may not know much about where their food comes from?

A huge issue in my district is the lack of access to quality and natural food products. I would love to facilitate a pipeline where upstate farmers were able to sell wholesome foods directly to my constituents.

How would you characterize your first year in the Assembly?

Frenetic, but in a good way. I've learned so much, and understand the moving pieces a lot more, which will ultimately make me a more effective legislator, going forward. It's been a rewarding experience.



Assemblyman James Skoufis
Assembly District 99 - Woodbury

What has your time been like serving on the Assembly Agriculture Committee?

As a new Assembly Member, I've certainly learned a great deal about the workings of state government, but I've also found some of our more urban legislators on the committee willing to listen to the concerns that farmers are facing in our state, even though none may be located in their district.

What is your top priority while on the Ag. Committee?

Agriculture is an integral part of my district's economy and the Hudson Valley's fabric as a whole. My personal top policy priority has been reforming the property tax system that is crippling our family farmers and many others.

How can urban and rural lawmakers find common ground on farm and food issues?

Urban legislators need to realize and understand that their food shed is only possible because of the agriculture that exists in the rest of the state.

What have you learned about agriculture in this state that you may not have known before this year?

I continue to be amazed at how passionate Hudson Valley farmers are about what they do and the people they serve.

How would you encourage the farming community to reach out to your constituents who may not know much about where their food comes from?

My district is fortunate to host many farmers' markets which has definitely raised the visibility of what Hudson Valley grows and produces. Farmers, legislators, and consumers all need to continue to make sure our neighbors know just how important and invaluable our agricultural community is.

How would you characterize your first year in the Assembly?

My first year has been extremely interesting to be a part of and, most importantly, a productive time. I've also worked extremely hard to put together and pass a number of bills this session - six at the time of writing - all of which are a direct benefit to my constituents, including a bill to expand the local wine trail and raise the visibility of our local vineyards.

Commodity Report: Non-Traditional Livestock

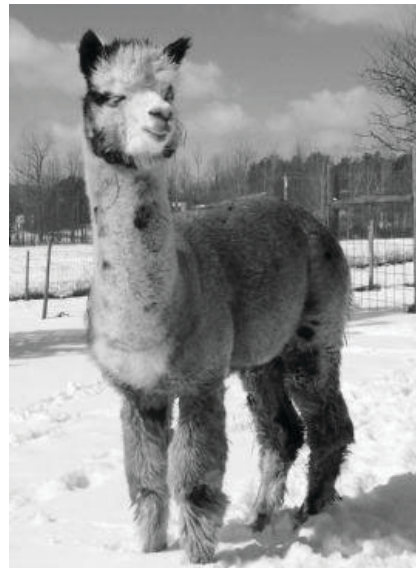
From Barn to Yarn: NYFVI Supports Development of NY Alpaca Fiber Product Line "Empire"

145 farms strong, The Empire Alpaca Association is a leader in the alpaca industry. The members of EAA take their mission statement to heart striving to promote, educate, and support alpaca breeders, owners and enthusiasts of New York State.

The New York Farm Viability Institute is currently funding a grant project to develop and brand a new line of "Empire" alpaca yarn and products. This variety of products such as scarfs, throws, and socks, will be made from only NYS raised and milled fiber. Cynthia Cuykendall, project leader and CNY alpaca farmer, feels providing producer education opportunities are also a large part of the project's goals. Sorting and grading workshops are being conducted throughout the project's duration helping farmers learn how to maximize the quality of their raw fleece and understand how that

impacts end product quality. Assisting producers with how to increase sales in new and existing alpaca markets and increase demand is also an important objective. The "Empire" products made will be marketed at Empire Farm Days, NY State Fair, and multiple Fiber Festivals all over the state. The alpaca industry has only been in the US since 1984, proving great opportunity to further development this agriculture sector for its unique and desirable qualities.

For more information about The Empire Alpaca Association visit <http://empirealpacaassociation.com>



Alpaca picture provided by Cynthia Cuykendell

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The YF&R program helps young members shape the future of agriculture, as well as their individual futures, with leadership development and personal growth opportunities. Through three competitive events, members are able to showcase their leadership experience, communication skills and successful farm plans as they compete against the best of the best Farm Bureau has to offer.

As part of the YF&R competitive events, winners in the Achievement Award, Discussion Meet and Excellence in Ag areas will receive their choice of a **2014 Chevrolet Silverado** or **GMC Sierra** truck, courtesy of GM; nine national finalists will receive a **Case IH Farmall** tractor, courtesy of Case IH; as well as a **\$2,500 cash prize** and **\$500 in STIHL merchandise.**



Have You E-Lobbied Lately?

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For more information about YF&R competitive events and how you can get involved, contact your state Farm Bureau office or the American Farm Bureau Federation® at yfr@fb.org or 202-406-3600

Education News

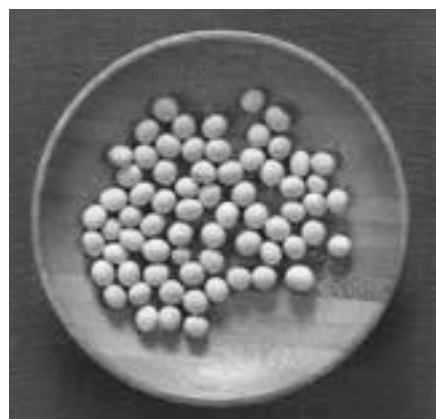
A Day on the Green Could Be In Your Future!

You could enjoy a day on the green raising the green to support the agricultural education programs that fight myths and misconceptions. Save the date, Tuesday, September 10th, for the 12th Foundation Golf Classic! Make your reservations and help us contact potential sponsors, as we all are the beneficiaries.

En-Joie Golf Club in Endicott is the venue and the Golf Pro will again provide amazing support and our Golf Committee will be busy providing all of the many important on-site duties that make this event so special. En-Joie was home to the PGA Tour's BC Open from 1972 through 2006, and since July of 2007 is the home of the Dick's Sporting Goods Open. En-Joie has a Four Star Rating in Golf Digest's "Best Places to Play!"

We officially invite you to be part of the NYFB Foundation Golf Classic and come "Play Where The Pros Play" or just come and enjoy the many New York tastes available at our reception at Broome County's Home Course in the heart of Central NY's Susquehanna Valley, only 60 miles South of Syracuse, ten minutes from Binghamton and only two miles off of NY Route 17. Sponsorship and player information is available on our website at www.nyfbfoundation.org as well as a mailing to those who may be interested as players and/or sponsors. If you would like

information, please call us at 1-800-342-4143.



The Amazing Soybean! A multi-faceted consumer program to enhance ag literacy and understanding.

By Sandra Prokop
sprokop@nyfb.org

The New York Corn & Soybean Growers Association has funded this special project, which helps to develop a consuming public with an understanding of the journey from farm to product; awareness of the versatility and diversity of use of soybeans plus the economic impact via many avenues of agriculture; and a "taste" for soy products, dispelling misconceptions and myths that hinder the swift and efficient movement of product and consumer use.

The Soybean Project has several facets providing an opportunity to "touch" as many consumers of all ages as possible. Our presence at Empire Farm Days and the New York State Fair will feature Soybeans in a variety of exhibits, games, and activities. The soybean educational tools at these events will be available for all counties to borrow for local and regional events.

Our wheel of agriculture has been updated with soy questions and our prizes this year carry out the theme as we present the wheel winners with a special soy taste treat. We will also have "feel" boxes, an interactive learning experience. The boxes have compartments which accommodate a small amount of a soy product to be identified by touch, guided by information and choices that are available on

the box. Many soy products are easily recognizable, but as there are so many, we have a variety of choices that introduce new soy products. This touch experience is partnered with a new brochure filled with information to provide an extended learning experience.

We are also creating a video presentation about New York Agriculture, with a special segment dedicated to the Soybean. The video will premiere at the New York State Fair (more information for you in next month's Grassroots). The Soybean education process would not be complete without showcasing for a month in the Foundation Ag Fact School Calendar. Each day of the month contains a quick soy fact that is read by the class or an individual student and shared. Distribution to 3,500 classrooms free of charge provides an impact to more than 85,000 third grade students. Teachers' comments rate this tool as "excellent".

Paul Bencal, Chairman of the Foundation Board of Directors shared, "We applaud the New York Corn and Soybean Growers Association for their tremendous efforts to advance the level of agricultural literacy and join forces with the New York Farm Bureau Foundation to reach out to an avid audience with an educational experience that will impact agriculture so positively".

The Year of the MagiCicadas

By Linda Fix
Pro-Ed Committee Member

Even beyond farming - every 17 years there is a natural phenomenon that happens in nature - and the time is now! It's the year of the MagiCicadas (aka Brood II). This red-eyed variety is found in the eastern states. These noisy creatures find their way out of the ground and will begin singing, even screeching for mates. The male cicadas perch on tree branches and will sing until a female approaches. The male mating calls are no joke and can reach up to 100 decibels - that's a loud rock concert! After the mating process, the females are busy laying their eggs in bulk, with some 600 eggs in tree limbs. The spawn eventually burrow into the earth and cycle through the molting stages until another 17 years pass, which will be again in the year 2030.

Cicadas are expected to arrive when ground temperature hits about 64 degrees, which is usually around Memorial Day. They hang around for about four to six weeks - long enough to make their mark on the trees. Fruit trees are abundant in the northeast but are not necessarily the insects only home. They will nest on any tree that has a tempting branch on which to lay eggs. While the Cicadas may cosmetically interrupt the look

of the trees, they typically do not do any long-term damage, except for the most tender of trees and they certainly keep the farmer company in the fields singing along!

Mother Nature has an uncanny way of keeping all of us farmers guessing.

As you can imagine, the weather plays a large part in farming. Farmers have had a rough time in recent years with frost, hail and flood damage. But even after all of it, the farmer starts again every spring with a spring in his or her step, preparing yet again for another season to plant, grow and steward the land. The rewards from a bountiful harvest are greatly satisfying. Even with bumps along the road, farmers are dedicated to their land, fields and animals - and welcome the nuances of nature like the MagiCicadas. Even the bees are buzzing and helping out by pollinating with the new blooms waking up!

We don't thank our farmers enough for all of their hard work and dedication continuing to produce the nutritious food we eat. So take a moment when you hear the MagiCicadas this spring to think about all that comes from nature. And when you meet a farmer - thank him or her for all that they bring from nature to your table too.

Ag Trivia:

True or False:

Soy crayons are the first advancement in crayons since they were introduced in the US in the late 1800's.

From The Field

Fairs and Festivals in Region 3

REGION 3



Skip Jensen
sjensen@nyfb.org

The weather always gives farmers something to talk about. Either it's too dry, too hot, too cold or too wet. This spring is sure no exception. I think most areas of New York have had plenty of rain. There have been some real challenges to get first cutting hay done and corn planted. Produce and vegetable growers are still challenged trying to continue their planting. Some of the planted crops really looked stressed and I'm sure yields will be compromised. A big event coming up is the Finger Lakes Cheese Festival July 27, 2013. Several Finger Lakes County Farm Bureaus are helping to sponsor the festival. This year's festival is scheduled for Sunset View Creamery in Odessa, NY. The Hoffman family milk Holstein cows and has been making cheese at their Odessa farm for several years and is looking forward to hosting the Cheese Festival.

Cayuga

Cayuga County Farm Bureau will be participating in the Owasco Lake Day. We will have a display about Farm Bureau and have members attend to explain farming practices and how farmers help keep the lake clean. Cayuga will again this year sponsor pizzas for the 4-H kids at the 4-H Youth Fair at the O'Hara Museum in Auburn. The County Board members and membership workers continue to hand out barn signs to members. Another ongoing project is their school scholarship program that gives money to schools that are in need so they can use the money for transportation to a farm for a field trip.

Ontario

This is the year of Ontario County's Fun on the Farm. This is a huge promotional event for agriculture in Ontario County. This year's event is being held at El-Vi Farm. El-Vi milks 1000 cows and has about the same number of youngstock. They grow all the forage and some of the grain for the cows. The committee is already busy at work planning the event to be held on Saturday September 21. On Friday the 20th the farm is host to school kids from

every school in Ontario County. It is really a big event. Consider this your invitation. We would love to have other Farm Bureau folks come and visit us.

Seneca

Seneca is once again planning a big display at the county fair. They always go all out for the fair. They have lots of promotional materials and really showcase the local agriculture. Another event where we will have a presence is the Winestock event on June 29 at Three Brothers Winery. We will have the Ag Master Kiosk there to challenge the wine goers' knowledge of agriculture.

Tompkins

Tompkins County will have their annual Farm City day Saturday August 10 from 11 AM to 4 PM. They are trying something different this year by highlighting several farms in the western part of the county. Participants will be able to see more than one farm and there will be some unique agriculture to see by traveling from farm to farm. This is another good event where Farm Bureau and Cornell Cooperative Extension work very closely to promote local agriculture.

Wayne

June 8 was the date for Wayne County's annual consignment auction. They use this event as a money raiser for programs and events mostly for the Young Farmers and lobby trips to Albany and Washington. This year's auction was successful and the proceeds will be used throughout the year. The Young Farmer group had the concession stand and this helped raise more money.

Yates

Yates County honored this year's county Pro Ed Scholarship winner with a \$250.00 scholarship awarded at the Penn Yan Schools award night June 3, 2013. This year's winner was Nicholas Anderson of Penn Yan. Nicholas attended BOCES while in high school and plans to study Veterinary Technology at Alfred State SUNY College of Technology.

Scholarship Winner Recognized



Yates County Pro Ed Scholarship winner Nicholas Anderson (left) accepts his scholarship check for \$250 from Yates County Farm Bureau President Matt Lewis.

Wet Spring in the Hudson Valley

With planting and scattered showers things are looking good in the Hudson Valley after an unusual spring with dry then wet weather. The Farm Markets and Farmers Markets are opening with their wonderful locally grown products.

REGION 10



Marilyn Howard
mhoward@nyfb.org

It's good to see farmers haying, planting and busy this time of year planning for a wonderful harvest, signs on the side of the roads announcing strawberries, cherries, blueberries, etc. Go find the fruits and vegetables that make it summer for you.

Orange

John Lupinski, President of Orange County Farm Bureau, and his wife Diana have been working on Ag in the classroom activities, which are running quite smoothly and with new energy. Orange County Farm Bureau Board members gathered recently in Pine Island with various elected leaders and other local business associations to recognize the importance of the black dirt farming region in Orange County. Orange County Assemblywoman Annie Rabbitt, long a supporter of New York agriculture and Hudson Valley farmers, specifically recognized Board member Chris Pawelski for his work in advocating for Orange county onion farmers.

Dutchess Putnam Westchester

Again the FFA of Pine Plains out did themselves with 200 people at their spring dinner Clayton Stephens and Kristen Pelletier received a \$1000 scholarship

from the Miller Scholarship Fund honoring Mike and Harold Miller. Mrs. Chris Mac Neil and Ronda Murphy have really been strong leaders for the Pine Plains FFA. They won many awards at the State FFA Convention and Clayton Stephens will represent them at the National FFA Convention this fall for Sheep Production and Extemporaneous Speaking. The Dutchess County Dairy Committee Inc., who is a member, awarded their annual scholarships. Winning for this year were Clayton Stephens and Kristen Pelletier, they are attending college and will receive \$2000 their first year and \$1000 each year they stay in college (max \$5000).

Don't miss the Dutchess Putnam Westchester Farm Bureau Policy Development Picnic!

Loan your voice to the "grassroots" ideas that can become county policy and then on to policy for our legislators in Albany and Washington DC.

Place: Lime Kiln Recreation Center, 5 Rhinekill Road, East Fishkill, NY

When: July 25, 2013

Time: 6:30pm.

RSVP 845-868-7171 by July 19. DPWFB will provide hamburgers, hot dogs and drinks, each family is asked to bring a dish to pass.

The Dutchess County Fair is August 20-25th if you would like to volunteer to manage the booth call 845-868-7171. Our booth is in the Salute to Agriculture Tent in the track area, stop by and see us between the calving area and all the local vegetables, the piglets, and chicks, then go up on Livestock Hill and see the animals and flowers and get in line for a milk shake.

Columbia

Columbia County Farm Bureau has been working on ways to educate the public on many issues beginning with reading to classrooms and supporting local

From The Field

Continued from Page 8

conferences. With a partnership with the Columbia Chamber of Commerce, they planned a program for the Ag Brunch which was held in Hudson at the Club Helsinki. Jim Davenport, President of CCFB, Linda Fix, Sec/Treas, Will Yandik, Vice President, Lloyd Vail, Jr. Director, Beth Chittenden, Director, Todd Erling, Director and Chairman of HV Ag Economic Development and Philip Trowbridge Presidents of the American Angus Association, met with the Chamber and presented their plan for a panel discussion at the Brunch. Club Helsinki brought in local products to prepare and provided a beautiful backdrop for the event. They are now planning an Ag Tour with the Chamber; it has turned out to be a great partnership. The Friends of the Farmer Festival is an annual celebration that promotes local food, farmers, and community commerce. This year's event will take place on July 19th & 20th at the Copake Country Club in Copake NY.

DUTCH HOLLOW FARMS Open House is on August 4th, from 11—4. No Fee. Come and take tours of the farm. Take a hayride. Watch the cows being milked. Bring the children to pet the small animals. There will be food and drinks available. This is an Agricultural Education experience.

The Columbia County Fair is

August 28-Sept. 2, stop by and talk to a farmer, see the animals and have a milk shake!

Ulster

Ulster FB has plans to start membership early this year. Charles and Susan Hurd have been working hard to finish the 2013 membership year and are planning a Kick Off to begin 2014. Susan has been very successful in signing up new members and her efforts are appreciated. Ulster County Farm Bureau has been active in working on landowner rights in the past few months.

Rockland

NYS Assembly Standing Committee on Real Property Taxation, Task Force on Food, Farm and Nutrition Policy Roundtable Discussion on Effectiveness of Ag Districts Law in Suburban Communities held a meeting with Assemblywoman Sandy Galef and Assemblywoman Ellen Jafee and many of the Soil & Water representatives in the District and Sullivan CCE and Health Department, Cathy Mural from NYFB, Marilyn Howard, Dave Tetor, Linda Hill and John McDowell. Linda and John have been working for at least five years on an Ag District for Rockland but the acreage is just not there. Putnam County also has a problem with acreage and expressed concern over the 500A. There were several ideas,

maybe something will happen now.

July is membership month and if you know someone who is not a member ask them to join, or if you picked this paper up in an office, at a fair or some other place join us in supporting Agriculture.

Annual Grown On LI Day Approaches

REGION 11



Joe Gergela
jgergela@lifb.com

Plans are underway for our third annual "Grown on LI Day", a one day farmers market featuring Long Island Grown products. The purpose of this event is to highlight our farmers and the products they grow and make our citizens aware that they can have access to locally grown produce by shopping at our farmstands and wineries and looking for Long Island Grown in their local supermarkets. This year's event will once again be held at the Suffolk County Farm in Yaphank on August 9th from

10am-2pm. Some activities at the market will include hayrides, a scavenger hunt for the children, a seafood throw down, roasted corn and your chance to meet and talk to our local farmers. Admission is free. Visit www.lifb.com for more details.

Our annual Policy Development/resolutions meeting is scheduled for August 26th at the Long Island Farm Bureau office. This is your chance to become involved in helping to shape Long Island Farm Bureau policy. Policy developed at this meeting will be brought forth and voted upon by the members of Long Island Farm Bureau at our annual meeting in October. If those policies are passed, they will be sent to the state Farm Bureau and presented to the delegates at the NYFB annual meeting in December for inclusion in the State policy book.

Long Island Farm Bureau's sixteenth annual golf outing will be held on Wednesday October 9th at Baiting Hollow Country Club in Baiting Hollow. This is one event you will not want to miss. A great afternoon of golf on a Robert Trent Jones Sr. design followed by a scrumptious dinner featuring Long Island Grown products including Long Island ducking, seafood and wines, will be a day for the ages. Not a golfer? Sponsorships are available if you would like to help support us. For more information visit our website at www.lifb.com to print the invitation and pricing options. Funds raised will help support the important work of Long Island Farm Bureau.

Long Island Wine Council is holding their fourth annual Harvest East End wine and food classic on Saturday, August 24, 2013 at the McCall Vineyard & Ranch, Cutchogue, NY. Following is an excerpt from their press release:

"Be a part of this gracious, fourth-annual event and harvest the world-class wine and local flavors of one of the world's most exciting, emerging viticultural and culinary destinations! This year's very special HARVEST, presented by Wine Enthusiast, commemorates 40 years of winemaking in Long Island Wine Country. Join us as 42 winemakers pour some of their most coveted selections, and 32 top regional chefs serve local, seasonal dishes. Organized by the Long Island Wine Council with support from Merliance, HARVEST benefits four important regional charities: East End Hospice, Group for the East End, the Peconic Land Trust and Long Island Farm Bureau Promotion & Education Foundation. Get details and tickets at www.harvesteastend.com"

Barn Sign Campaign Continues



Columbia County Farm Bureau member Stu Kinne from Columbia Tractor Case Dealership displays his new barn sign.

News Briefs

Study: Generation Influences Milk Consumption

A recent study published by USDA examines milk consumption by different generations. The report examines trends in Americans' fluid milk consumption, including average portion sizes and generational differences in the frequency of milk drinking, to investigate possible explanations for the continued decreases.

One explanation is that younger generations drink less milk at mealtimes, reducing the number of consumption occasions. USDA finds that Americans born after 1930 begin the decline in consumption and each subsequent generation drinks less and less fluid milk per day on average. Differences across the generations in fluid milk intake may help account for the observed decreases in per capita fluid milk consumption in recent decades despite public and private sector efforts to stem the decline.

State Assembly Defeats Biotech Food Labeling Legislation

The New York State Assembly Consumer Protection Committee recently voted down a bill requiring New York to label food produced with genetically modified ingredients. New York Farm Bureau's position is based upon the U.S. Food and Drug Administration position that "...there is no significant difference between foods produced using bio-engineering, as a class, and their conventional counterparts."

The Assembly Committee had concerns that the legislation would increase costs to New York farmers and food retailers and create a tax-payer funded, state administered labeling program in New York. In addition to consumer and cost considerations, labeling efforts in other states have raised major questions on the constitutionality of such laws.

New York Farm Bureau helped, but almost every agricultural organization lent their name to a memo of opposition. The New York Assembly vote is notable, as a number of other Northeastern states have passed or are close to passing similar laws.

NYFB Weighs In On Indian Nation Issue

While NYFB does not have specific policy regarding the recent settlement agreement between the State of New York and the Oneida Indian Nation, the organization has long been concerned about how the Indian Nation activities, particularly the purchasing of additional land acreage, will impact family farms in Madison and Oneida counties. Not only are there concerns about competitiveness between Indian Nation businesses and other local

businesses, farmers worry about the impact to municipalities and rural school districts from the loss of so much of the taxable land base. Since the settlement agreement was approved by the County governments of Oneida and Madison, and included a revenue share agreement, some of that concern has been mitigated, but it leaves farmers and land owners in the area facing a potential loss of over 7,000 more acres of land, land that could have been available for farmers or other local businesses and residents. Because of this strong concern of the Oneida and Madison County Farm Bureau Boards of Directors, NYFB weighed in on newly proposed legislation, sponsored by Senator Nozzolio and Assemblymember Kolb, which would require the state to utilize general fund dollars to make financially whole municipalities and school districts from any future losses of tax revenue due to land claim settlement agreements with Indian Nations. While the legislation failed to pass both houses, NYFB will weigh in with the Governor, on behalf of our County Farm Bureau's, as the Indian Nation land claim settlement goes forward.

House Chips Away At Potato Bias

Potatoes are packed with nutrition; they are high in iron, Vitamin A and C, and contain more potassium than bananas. But this veggie is often maligned for its preparation as fries, chips and being smothered in condiments.

USDA and Congress have both tried to limit potato consumption in federal food programs, but recently the House of Representatives has started fighting back and standing up for potato farmers.

The Farm Bill that the House of Representatives is considering includes language added in the Agriculture Committee in May by Rep. Reid Ribble of Wisconsin that would require the Secretary of Agriculture to conduct a review of the economic and public health benefits of white potatoes on low-income families at nutritional risk. Then during mark-up of the Agriculture Appropriations bill in early June, the House Appropriations Committee adopted an amendment from Rep. Mike Simpson of Idaho which allows white potatoes to be included as part of the WIC food program.

During debate on both these successful amendments, critics cited health concerns and advocates emphasized that potatoes are a healthy, cost-effective food. In fact, the National Potato Council notes on its website, "At \$0.10 per 1/2 cup serving, potatoes are the most affordable item found in the produce aisle and would allow participants to stretch their WIC vouchers and allow mothers to more economically feed their families."

While there is a long road until either of these provisions become law, it is a positive indication that House members are beginning to recognize the benefits of potatoes in nutrition programs.

EPA to Scrutinize Bay States' CAFO Programs

On May 29, 2013, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a revised settlement agreement (Fowler et al. v. EPA) under which the EPA will focus on reducing nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment loadings from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Under the agreement, EPA will review compliance with existing Clean Water Act permits for CAFOs in the Bay watershed area, assess existing CAFO programs of the Bay states, inspect certain smaller, unpermitted animal feeding operations (AFOs), and by June 30, 2018, decide on the basis of these reviews whether a national CAFO rulemaking is needed. EPA is looking to review state AFO and CAFO programs for consistency with their respective state Watershed Implementation Programs (WIPs). The American Farm Bureau Federation is currently challenging EPA's authority to promulgate the Chesapeake Bay TMDL and enforce WIPs over state authority under the Clean Water Act in court. At the time of this writing, litigation was still ongoing.

NYFB is monitoring EPA's activities and continuing their active discussions with EPA and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation over the integrity and value of the State's CAFO and Agricultural Environmental Management programs to simultaneously maximize natural resource protection and farm production. NYFB will keep members apprised of developments.

NYFB President Visits State Capitol



Senator Patty Ritchie, Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee and Dean Norton, President of New York Farm Bureau discuss the prospects of farm legislation outside the Senate Chamber during the last days of the scheduled 2013 Legislative Session. Julie Suarez, Director of Public Policy for New York Farm Bureau, looks on.

Protecting Agriculture in Suburbia

By Cathy Mural
cmural@nyfb.org

Brought together by their support for local food and local farms, Assembly members Ellen Jaffee, Sandy Galef and Bill Magee hosted a roundtable discussion investigating the effectiveness of Agricultural District Law in suburban communities. This joint effort brought the resources of the Assembly Agriculture Committee chaired by Assemblyman Magee, the Assembly Real Property Taxation Committee chaired by Assemblywoman Galef and the Assembly Task Force on Food, Farm and Nutrition Policy chaired by Assemblywoman Jaffee to bear on this emerging and timely issue. Joined by New York Farm Bureau, Soil and Water Conservation Districts staff, local government representatives, Cornell Cooperative Extension and other food and farm advocates, discussion focused on how to give farms in Rockland County accessibility to the Agricultural Districts Program when the acreage requirement could not be met due to development and population influx from New York City.

While the roundtable focused on Rockland County farms, the challenges of farming under changing public perception of where food comes from and how it is grown highlighted the importance of making this farm protection tool accessible to farmers where they need it most – in suburban and high pressure development areas. The problems and



Top Row: Assemblywoman Sandy Galef; Mary Hegarty, Rockland County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager; John McDowell, President of Rockland Farm Alliance; Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee; Joan Gussow, professor and author.
Bottom Row: Michelle Kleinman, Rockland County Department of Health Nutritionist; Susan Jaffee, Rockland County CCE Executive Director; Linda Concklin Hill, Rockland County Farm Bureau President.

possible solutions brought up in discussion resound with communities across the State who are looking to restore their local farm presence.

Without the benefit of an agricultural district, farmers are finding themselves running their ag operations under the scrutiny of neighbors influenced by changing cultural assumptions about what a farm is and how farming should be done. “We pick our battles,” said Linda Concklin Hill, Rockland County Farm Bureau President. “We no longer do school tours because of a neighbor complaint. We need more ag support in Rockland County.”

In response, Assemblywoman Jaffee commented on how children and young people need to be exposed to the “farm life experience”. “We need to discuss

how to maintain existing farms and to build new farms,” said Assemblywoman Jaffee who views building up the local farm network as part of her Task Force’s mission to fight hunger and improve nutrition.

At over forty years old, the Agricultural Districts Program has a long history of protecting NY agriculture from non-agricultural land uses, nuisance lawsuits, eminent domain actions and unreasonable local regulation. While authorized by the State, agricultural districts are implemented at the county level for the benefit of local farms with counties having discretion over adding and removing land from districts. There are 23,000 farms in agricultural districts located in 52 counties (NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets). Of these counties, the

highest concentration of farmland within agricultural districts is located in the more rural areas of the state.

While supportive of local farms, local government representatives discussed the cost and staff resources needed for implementation of an agricultural district which makes counties hesitant to embrace additional agricultural districts. Some counties have balanced the benefits of retaining agricultural districts against the high cost to establish, revise or review a district by consolidating district areas. “Transitioning from 18 to four agricultural districts makes the program much more manageable”, commented Dave Tetor from his experience as a Town supervisor

in Dutchess County and former Cornell Cooperative Extension staff. To be a successful venture for farmers and local communities, the Agricultural District Program needs to be financially and programmatically workable for county government staff.

NYFB will be working with these Assemblymembers over the summer to flesh out recommendations made by stakeholders for creation of ag districts in suburban areas and to stress the importance of agricultural districts to local food production. NYFB will keep members apprised of developments on this important issue that is capturing increasing numbers of farms throughout the State.

Proposed Deduction Regulations Finally Released

NYS Department of Labor has proposed new allowances for deductions following a law that was passed in the legislature last year. The bill that passed in the legislature stipulated specific allowances that covered employees (such as parking permits, health services, child care, etc), however did leave some room to expand. NYFB took this opportunity to work with the NYS DOL and be sure that benefits specific to agricultural employees would be present within the regulations. The main deduction that has been proposed is that of paycheck advances. The proposed regulation would permit an employer to make a deduction from an employee’s wages for repayment of advances of salary or wages made by the employer to the employee. An advance has been defined as money by the employer to the employee based on the anticipation of the earning of future wages.

The overall proposal of deductions is worded in a manner

that attempts to keep deduction possibilities open as long as they are for the benefit of the employee. NYFB will be reviewing this material and analyzing specific deductions that should potentially be requested when submitting comments. Currently the expansive language states that deductions will be for the benefit of the employee when they provide financial or other support for the employee, the employee’s family, or a charitable organization. The support is limited to the following categories: health and welfare benefits, pension, retirement benefits, child care and educational benefits, charitable benefits, dues and assessment, transportation, and food and lodging. It has been noted that deductions will continue to not be allowed in the area of the purchasing of tools, equipment and any attire required for work.

NYFB will keep members up to date on these regulations and when they have been finalized.

Case IH- Partners with NYFB — Be Ready!

Be ready to save on Case IH tractors, hay equipment and Scout UTVs! With the new Case IH Tractor & Equipment Incentive Program, New York Farm Bureau members can now take advantage of Case IH equipment discounts.

Eligible New York Farm Bureau members will receive a \$300 to \$500 incentive when purchasing qualifying Case IH equipment from their local dealer.

“This program will help save our members significant dollars when purchasing new Case IH equipment” said Kevin Cook, Director of Member Services for New York Farm Bureau. “It’s a great addition to the line-up of benefit programs we currently offer.”

The discount is stackable, meaning it can be used with other discounts, promotions, rebates or offers that may be provided by Case IH or a Case IH dealership.

A current Farm Bureau membership verification certificate must be presented to the Case IH dealer in advance of product delivery to receive the incentive discount. Print your certificate at www.fbverify.com/case.

Please visit www.nyfb.org to find a local Case IH dealer and view a list of eligible equipment.

Tips for Trouble-Free RV Travel

By Mike Spaulding

Sponsor Relations for Nationwide Insurance

So you've been looking forward to spending time out on the open road with family? The Great Smoky Mountains or Yosemite National Park may be the perfect option for your next destination – it's just a matter of getting there. With a recreational vehicle (RV) your travels can be both cost-effective and trouble-free with proper planning.

You may be surprised to find that the low cost of RV travel has driven many Americans to rent or purchase an RV for their vacations. RVs range from luxury motor homes to towables like truck campers and expandable trailers. A study conducted by PFK, an international travel and tourism consulting company, found that traveling in an RV can save a family of four anywhere from 28 to 59 percent compared to combined cost of hotel rooms, restaurant dining and other expenses. RV travel has consistently been a less, if not the least expensive method of travel, according to a study conducted by the Recreational Vehicle Industry

Association (RVIA).

If you own an RV or are considering renting one, be sure the vehicle is road ready to avoid costly repairs or an unexpected trip delay.

Nationwide Insurance has compiled five years of RV claims data that show tire problems and roof damage are two of the leading issues its customers face.

Of the RV claims filed, nearly 60 percent were for tire issues. Many of the incidents may have been prevented with better tire maintenance or packing techniques when traveling.

Traveling in a recreational vehicle is fun, but following a few safety tips can make the difference between delight and disaster," said Dawn Stoppelmoor, powersports product director who leads RV insurance products. "We have patched many RVs on the road to salvage a vacation, but some pre-trip maintenance and reminders can help keep consumers on the road and out of the repair garage."

Improper packing that leads to uneven loads can have harmful effects including restricted braking, blowouts and even breakdowns. It is extremely important that drivers be aware of their surroundings and familiar with the vehicle's size when maneuvering in close quarters. Size includes height too. One of every 10 claims being filed is for roof damage caused by drivers miscalculating their RV's height.

Crowded areas can be tricky to travel through with a large vehicle like an RV. One in seven claims occurred in areas such as gas stations where it can be hard for the driver to see other vehicles, awnings, poles and other hazards.

To prevent these issues, the solution may be as simple as verifying the height of your RV and adjusting your trip accordingly or leaving behind unnecessary and heavy luggage that may weigh down the vehicle to make your trip as successful as possible.

Here are a few more tips to ensure your trip is trouble-free:

- Check the RV's tire pressure and wear prior to departure, as well as occasionally during the trip
- Be sure to pack the vehicle so that weight is distributed evenly
- Give the RV the space it needs for braking and turning, especially around other vehicles. RVs need about 20 percent more distance to stop than the average car. For braking, allow a three-second distance between your RV and another vehicle
- Be conscious of the RV's clearance in terms of height, length and width

Whether you rent or own an RV, be safe on your summer trips!

Contact your local Nationwide agent, call 1-877-OnYourSide, or visit nationwide.com/NYFB.

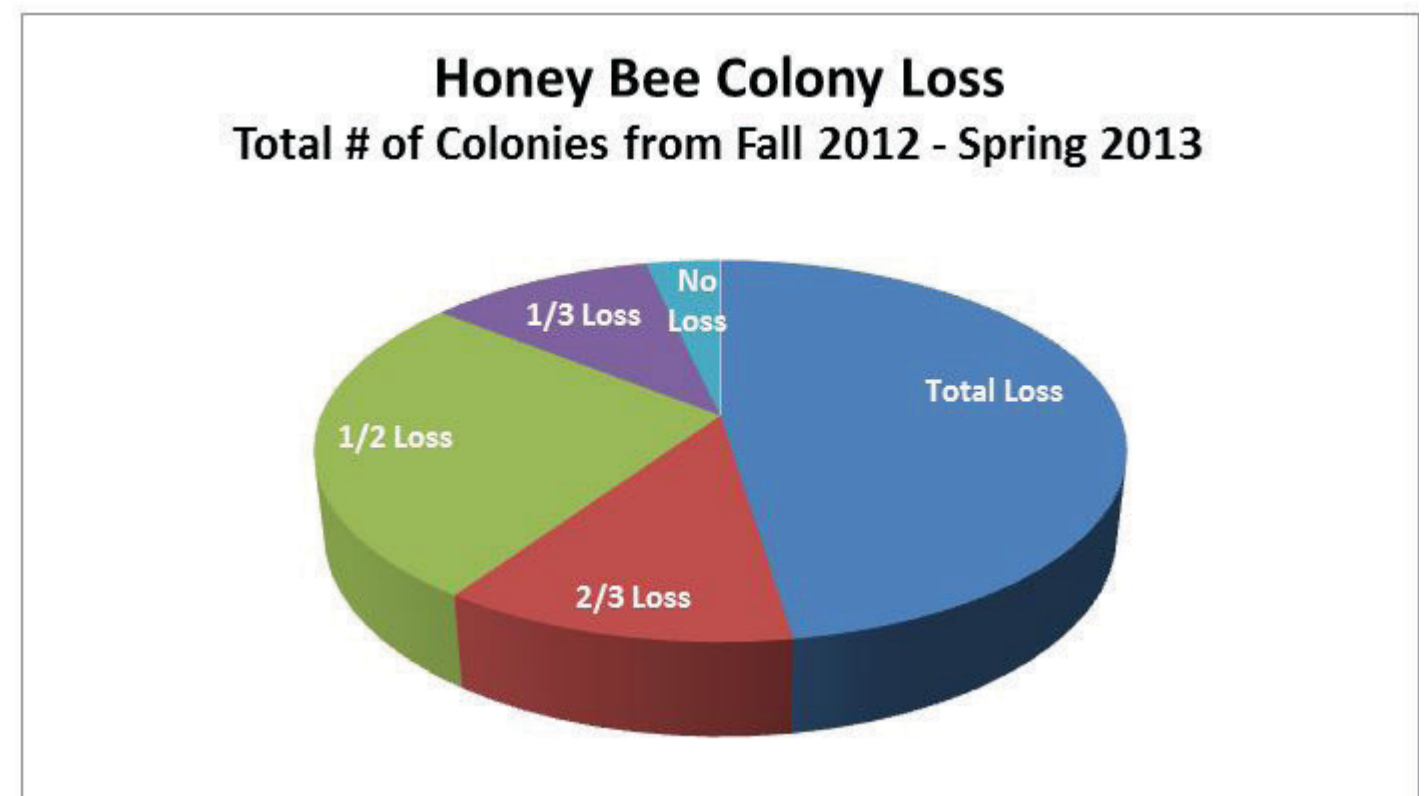
NYFB Bee Health Survey Demonstrates Beekeeper Struggles

By Cathy Mural

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Feedback from NYFB's anonymous survey regarding honey bee health and overwinter bee loss pointed to last year's drought and Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) as the main drivers of colony loss across the State. Many beekeepers greeted spring with empty hives devoid of their bee caretakers due to poor nutrition or starvation. Other beekeepers found some of their hives were spared although weakened by mites or dysentery. Statewide, beekeepers reported losses were higher than usual.

Of the approximate 100 responses NYFB received to their anonymous bee health survey, the pool of respondents reflected the state's overall apiary profile with a majority of hobbyists followed by sideliner and commercial beekeepers providing valuable feedback. Almost half of all respondents reported a total loss of their honey bee colonies. Over 75% of all respondents reported colony loss with hives presenting lots of honey but no or few bees remaining. Sideliner and commercial beekeepers felt multiple factors contributed to their colony loss while a supermajority of hobbyist beekeepers reported colony loss with honey present in the hive with no bees, a classic sign of Colony Collapse Disorder. Only five respondents reported no honey bee colony loss.



Weather played an integral role in the strength, health and sustainability of honey bee colonies. Last year's drought had a two-fold effect on forage for bees. Not only did drought restrict plant sources available for bee forage, it diminished the nutritional quality of plant pollen and nectars that was actually available to honey bees. With a limited food supply that was of lesser quality, malnourished or starving bees were unable to overwinter successfully as was indicated by 25% of survey participants.

Beekeeper comments from the survey varied. Some were surprised at their bee loss despite their

attentive care while others sadly lamented their lack of adequate management had contributed to their colonies' demise. Applied research and beekeeper education was regarded as key to overcoming CCD and rebuilding a robust honey bee population. Great interest was shown in the development and adoption of best management practices to keep bees alive and minimize CCD's impact on beekeepers' hives.

The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets estimates there are 70,000 colonies within New York's borders which pollinate more than \$300 million in production value of apples, grapes and other agricultural

crops. Approximately two thirds of New York's bee population is migratory, traveling to other parts of the country, from Florida to Maine to California, for pollination of the nation's crops. Pollination is a \$19 billion industry nationwide (Cornell University). Last year's challenging weather conditions also had an impact on statewide honey production with New York ranking 14th nationwide for 2012 with 2.65 million pounds of raw honey valued at over \$6 million (National Agricultural Statistics Service – USDA).

State Senators Tour Farm in Montgomery County

Glennville Farms was the first stop in a recent tour organized by New York State Soil and Water Conservation District Association's Executive Director Judy Littrell, for State Senator Tkaczyk and Senator Krueger.

Owned and operated by long time Montgomery County Farm Bureau members

Russ and Judy Kelly, along with their two sons, Russ proudly displayed his farm's participation in both the Agricultural Environmental Management program and the Cattle Herd Health Assurance program. The tour was designed to showcase the responsible stewardship that New York's many farms provide for the environment and our natural resources, as



From L - R: Russ Kelly, Senator Liz Krueger, Senator Cecelia Tkaczyk and Ryan Kelly.

well as the care taken of our livestock animals. New York Farm Bureau staffers Julie Suarez, Jeff Williams and Jaelyn Sears accompanied the Senators on the first stop, while the Senators continued with Judy Littrell to visit Dygert Farm, the Palatine Cheese plant, Heydenrych Beef Farm and Honorone Farm. All of these farms work closely with the

Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District to ensure that the respective farms adopt the most recent technology and good agricultural practices to safeguard the environment. Russ Kelly may have surprised Senator Krueger, from Manhattan, by taking the Senators up to the newly installed solar panels with the accompanying circuitry

and monitors. The solar installation represented the Kelly family's most recent commitment to the environment as well as the desire to try to shave a few extra dollars off of the farm's high energy bills. Senator Tkaczyk, newly elected to the state Senate in this past election cycle, serves on the Senate Agriculture Committee and has experience with raising sheep, and wanted to showcase her districts' farms

to her New York City colleagues. New York Farm Bureau greatly appreciates the Senator's efforts to help educate our downstate representatives, and Judy Littrell's excellent work in pulling the tour stops together, as having a better experience of the workings of our family farms can help translate into positive support on our various advocacy issues.

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Alpaca Farm Provides Great Comfort in More Ways Than One

By: Steve Ammerman
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On a quiet mountaintop in the Heldebergs overlooking rural Albany County, 10 Alpacas are living a peaceful life. But they're not the only ones. The peace they are providing to a 39-year-old man with autism means the world to his parents, Bob and Pam Rowe.

John Rowe spends every afternoon caring for the animals and just being in a calm environment that both the sweet alpacas and the gorgeous setting provide. It was the result his mother and father were hoping for when they purchased the Berne farm in 2005.

"Some environments are too stimulating for him, and this has been beautiful," said Bob Rowe.

The Rowes, who are New York Farm Bureau members, had been living in Schenectady, but after retirement decided to move back to where the couple had grown up about a half an hour west of Albany. They had visited a number of other Alpaca farms to learn about them, did their research, and ultimately purchased a couple animals from Staghorn Valley Farm in Delanson. The animals are similar to llamas but half the size, usually weighing no more than 150 pounds. They originated in the Andes Mountains of Chile and Peru.

However, while alpacas were new to the Rowes, the farming way of life was not. Bob Rowe grew up on his family's farm nearby cutting hay and raising chickens. He and his cousin then delivered eggs throughout the Schenectady area.

"The biggest thing we learned as teenagers was the interaction with people. That was a great learning tool every Saturday collecting eggs and going all over Schenectady. We had quite a business," he said.

Some of those same skills are put to use today. They have nearly a dozen animals that they breed. While the initial thought was to make money off of selling the curious critters, the Rowes soon found the market had fallen a bit. In turn, they begin selling products made from the wool. A woman in Bern knits a variety of hats, socks, scarves, you name it, and the Rowes travel to different arts and crafts shows selling their wares.

"We found that just selling the animals will probably not sustain the industry. Only so many people will buy animals, but if you get a business going with your products, there is pretty much agreement in the industry that the future is in product and fleece," said Bob Rowe.

They also market online and through social media, and while they are effective tools to get their name out there, they say there is nothing like experiencing a handmade product in person.

"Selling over the internet for us wasn't very profitable because you almost have to experience the fleece, hold it and see how soft it is. The best business model for us is to be out at shows," said Rowe. "We found our little niche so we got to go to more shows."

Their son John also has his niche as well. It is here that the farm is paying dividends that matter even more than money. The animals are kept in a large pen and have access to a small barn. In addition, there is a run of at least couple hundred feet that leads down the hill to a small, sunny pasture. This is where the alpacas, each with a name, like to lay on a warm day. Every afternoon John spends time with the animals caring for the animals, but more often than not, the bulk of the time is spent simply being with the alpacas.

"It is very calming for him. He also has Tourette's syndrome and has several ticks. He will have a verbal outburst, being a little loud, but the alpacas now trust him more than they do Pam or me. John never reaches for them. He is just out there with them," he said.

Like many people with autism, they need structure. Anything that is out of their routine can be upsetting. The farm is now a welcome routine. His mornings always start with a venture into town to go through the McDonald's drive-thru with his father, but it isn't long after that the call of the calming animals brings them home.

"Afternoons would get kind of tough when we were living in Schenectady," said Bob. "Now, it's 'home to the land' that he is always

talking about when we are out on our day trip. He wants to get back here and be with the animals, so his day is full."

The Rowes are to the point they are encouraging other parents with autistic children to give them a call. While they have always encouraged visitors to come to their farm which also features a small showroom for their products, they now would like to offer up the peacefulness as well. They believe it could help other children, much like it has helped John.

"This has been a wonderful venture. We struggled after his schooling ended. He had been in a lot of day programs but we wanted this to be his day program and find something meaningful for him and this has been it," he said.

For more information, you can visit the farm's website at www.alpacashackloft.com. You can also visit NYFB's Facebook page for additional pictures and video of the farm.



Above: John Rowe helps feed grain to the animals

Below: One of the inquisitive residents of the Alpaca Shack



Below: Bob Rowe checks on his herd in the pasture.





Dairy Cow Birthing Center to Debut at 2013 New York State Fair

The New York Animal Agriculture Coalition (NYAAC) has announced a new project that will share in real-time one of the miracles of modern agriculture. A Dairy Cow Birthing Center, debuting at the 2013 New York State Fair, will provide a unique opportunity for the public to witness a cow giving birth and to learn more about New York's dairy farms. The new exhibit will be located between Gates 6 & 10, adjacent to the FFA and Beef Barn, at the New York State Fair, August 22 – September 2, 2103.

“By providing an opportunity to witness the miracle of life, we expect the new Dairy Cow Birthing Center to be one of the most popular free exhibits at the State Fair this year, attracting tens of thousands of urban and suburban families,” said Jessica Ziehm, Executive Director of NYAAC. “The State Fair may be the only time these families ever see a cow and will hopefully take home not only a unique experience, but a greater understanding and appreciation for dairy farms in New York State by visiting this exhibit.”

To fulfill this initiative and to ensure a professional presence, NYAAC is partnering with Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine that will oversee the birthing process and animal care.

“Milk is New York's leading agricultural product, and it all begins with the dairy cow,” said Dr. Michael I. Kotlikoff, Austin O. Hooey Dean of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine. “Veterinarians and dairy farmers are partners in advancing the health and welfare of cows, and in improving the productivity of our farms. Together with our Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory, the College of Veterinary Medicine provides the infrastructure that helps make our farmers the most productive in the world. We are pleased to participate with the New York Animal Agriculture Coalition at the New York State Fair to raise awareness of the critical infrastructure that ensures the health and welfare of cattle and supports the production of safe and affordable dairy products in a sustainable manner.”

The Birthing Center will showcase four close-up cows from local dairy farms daily, which will be kept in a large box stall and

moved into a calving pen when labor commences. Veterinarians and veterinary students will be on hand around the clock to assist with the births and to explain the process to the public, as well as to answer any questions. Bleachers, along with a large video screen and live web cast, will help accommodate the anticipated large crowds.

Surrounding the box stall and calving pen will be professionally crafted and interactive exhibits that will explain the role New York's dairy farms play in the State's economy as well as the connections dairy farms have to the lives and livelihoods of every New Yorker. The educational exhibits will provide details on how cows are cared for, the recycling efforts on dairy farms, and the impact and contributions dairy farms make to the state and local communities. There will be free activities daily for families, as well as farm equipment on display and other exhibits to be announced.

The New York Corn and Soybean Growers graciously provided the seed money through the soybean checkoff to initiate the Dairy Cow Birthing Center. Julia Robbins, Executive Director of the New York Corn and Soybean Growers said, “Our organization supports this exhibit, knowing that as an industry we need to work together and support the development of high-quality educational displays and materials that are critical to generating a positive and lasting impression on the nearly one million fairgoers who attend the State Fair annually.”

In order to ensure the success of this complex exhibit, NYAAC is currently seeking additional funding from industry organizations and agri-businesses. If you care to support this initiative and contribute to its success, or wish to volunteer your time at the State Fair, please contact Jessica Ziehm with NYAAC at jaz67@cornell.edu or at 518-527-3949.

Photos courtesy of Tracey Buyce Photography and NYAAC



Passion & Perseverance Pay off for Organic Farmer



NYFB member Pam McSweeney on her farm in Westerlo, NY.

Continued from Page 1

said. McSweeney runs the farm with the help of two interns and her three kids who range in age from 13 to 20. She is among a growing number of women farmers who now make up a sixth of all principle farm operators in New York State, more than 6,000 strong according to the most recent Agriculture Census. Even though there are many like her out there, she still frequently encounters the stereotype of who people think a farmer should be. "There are more times than I

can count on both hands where I have been at a farmers' market, and most of the time it is women, and they are chatting with me and say, 'Oh, your husband is at home working on the farm and you come here to sell stuff.' I get that all the time," she said. But McSweeney doesn't linger on the topic long. She believes anyone can do what she does as long as you have the passion. And it does take passion to be a farmer with so many challenges thrust in their way.

McSweeney speaks of the farms she hears about who are going out of business or calling it quits. She says one of the toughest things is the continuously rising cost of production, a common concern for every farmer.

"And there is only so much you can charge for your product. Every year the costs go up tremendously. It is very tough financially, but I do see a lot of farms going out, but also new farms trying to make a go of it," she said.

Of course, she recognizes that start-up costs are expensive as well from taxes, equipment purchases and insurance. There is also substantial paperwork involved, including her the work to maintain USDA's organic certification for her farm. It is just one of the approaches she has used to help her bottom line. Another is participating in FarmieMarket, a fairly new venture in the Capital District that allows people to order food online from local farms that is then delivered to the customers' homes. While her 100 member CSA is more than half of her business, the FarmieMarket and her sales at three nearby farmers' markets also provide important income.

"Almost all of my loyal, good long-term customers at some point in their lives had some contact with farming. Whether their grandparents had a farm, or they grew up on a farm and got away with it," said McSweeney. "They were in touch with it at some point in their lives and want to reconnect with it."

McSweeney keeps her customers informed with a weekly newsletter that includes stories from the farm like when she had to chase down Runaway Iris, a calf that got loose and ran a couple miles down the road. She also wants to educate her customers on how family farms are the backbone of their communities.

Continued on next page

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NYFB President Speaks at Congressional Event



NYFB President Dean Norton spoke at an event in early June hosted by Congressman Chris Collins (R-Clarence) to announce his co-sponsorship of H.R.1727, the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Opportunity Act of 2013. Congressman Chris Gibson (R-Kinderhook) held an event in April marking co-sponsorship and Congressman Sean Patrick Maloney (D-Cold Spring) is also a sponsor. All three serve together on the House Agriculture Committee.

Passion & Perseverance Pay off

Continued from page 16

“To let them know how important their support of the family farm is and what we give back to the community and what they give to us. I am up to 30 local businesses that my farm supports through purchases, repairs and things like that. That money stays in the local community,” she said. “If everyone just bought some of their food from local farms, our farms would thrive. And our small communities would thrive and overall, our state would thrive.”

Getting that message out is one of the reasons why McSweeney is a member of New York Farm Bureau. She says we need a strong voice to speak up for agriculture and for the family farms.

“I feel like our food is so important and I am glad more and more people are realizing that. I think our physical health and our community’s health is so important and it all revolves around agriculture and food and I think the farm bureau is so important for that reason. It is the farmer’s voice in Albany and Washington and letting everyone know how important agriculture is,” said McSweeney.

She knows that is especially important now with so many challenges facing farmers. McSweeney says being a farmer has shown her what her strengths and weaknesses are, but most importantly, it displays her perseverance. She is confident she can accomplish what she sets her mind

too in the good times and bad. After all, she did make a bold move eight years ago to become a farmer.

“It is scary. There were nights and there still are when I will lie awake at night and think what have I done. But you go to sleep and get up the next morning and just do it. Once I start working I feel better. You don’t look at the big picture. You look at what you have to do that day and start chipping away it. You dot let yourself get overwhelmed by it,” she said.

As she looks ahead, McSweeney is encouraged by what she see and hopes more young farmers continue to give it a try as she did. She says to start small, and don’t get discouraged. In the end, she says it takes that passion she still feels, calling farming a way of life. At this point, she doesn’t know if her children will stick around to take over the family farm, but remains hopeful and is happy she can provide them with an upbringing that stresses an important work ethic and the values of tending to the land and their community.

“There has definitely been a change from when I first started. More of the general public is starting to realize the importance of farming and supporting their local farmers,” said McSweeney. “I feel optimistic for the future of agriculture.”

State DOL Releases Plan for the New Season

By Nicole Willis
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The New York State Department of Labor has released their PY 2013 Wagner-Peyser Agricultural Outreach Plan. This plan is under the direction of the Division of Immigrant Policies and Affairs and outlines their strategy, plan and initiatives for the coming year. NYFB has provided comments on this document in past years and will be providing comments this year as well. In addition, the outreach plan has been circulated to the NYFB Labor committee for review. The plan currently includes an assessment of need (for both employers and employees), outreach activities, assessment of staff availability to complete these activities, services provided to migrant workers through the American Job Center Network, services provided specifically to agriculture employers through the American Job Center Network, data analysis of past year 2012 and requirements of the NYS DOL to request comment and submit specific information to the public.

A main focus for NYFB in past years has been to strengthen outreach services provided to employers. While our organization supports protections of workers, it is imperative that

the employers are supported by the Department as well. This includes, but is not limited, to labor posters required by law, contact lists, information on the federal bonding program, information on what is required for employer regarding unemployment insurance and workers compensation, and a book on grants that are available to farms.

A focus this coming year for the agricultural outreach plan is that of a better matching program for farms and employees. It has been NYFB’s goal to return DIPA to the activities that were performed by the rural outreach program previously as per our member approved policy. Farmers have expressed that there has been a lack of employment referrals since the shift within the Department. The proposed outreach plan currently plans on turning their focus on heavily providing Agricultural Employers the domestic labor needed to succeed. Their hope is that use of the New York State Job Bank will be successful for both workers and employers. Again, NYFB is closely monitoring this initiative and will continue to be in close communication with farmers as to what is or is not working within the system.

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Compliance Corner

Tourist Signage for New York Farms

By Lisa Ovitt, Paralegal
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With beautiful spring weather and more folks traveling on the weekends and during vacation time, we are hearing from members of an interest in signage advertising their farm business, such as farm stands. New York has a signs program to advertise just such a business, but there are restrictions and rules to follow, as well as an application process.

History of Signage on the Interstate Highway System

In 1965 president Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Highway Beautification Act to create control for outdoor advertising along the nation's growing Interstate Highway System. Congress had determined that this control was necessary to protect the public investment in the highways, to promote the safety and recreational value of public travel, and to preserve the natural beauty of America's highways. Congress also realized that controlling the proliferation of signs along the Interstate Highway System and Primary Highway System would enhance the free flow of interstate commerce. Congress provided for the appropriation of funds to assist the states in the removal of non-conforming signs. New York (along with other states) entered into an agreement with the U.S. Secretary of Transportation to pass legislation and develop rules and regulations controlling the erection and maintenance of signs along specific highways. The section of the NYS Signs Program that encompasses signage a farm might use to advertise itself is Tourist Oriented Directional (TOD) signs.

The NYS Signs Program

The structure of the NYS Signs

Program provides that "No sign may interfere with an official sign, signal, or traffic control device, or obscure the driver's view of approaching, merging or intersecting traffic, nor may any sign pose, in the opinion of the Department of Transportation a safety hazard, or an impediment to the smooth flow of traffic." TOD signs are intended for rural areas and are not available in urbanized areas, including Long Island, New York City and other large cities. The intent of these signs is to provide directional information to the traveling public about places located on non-primary routes. The type of places included are natural phenomena, historic, cultural, scientific, educational and religious sites, places for camping, lodging, eating, vehicle service and repair, as well as signs advertising services, activities, arts, crafts or products that are generally and commonly accepted to be of specific interest to the traveling public for the particular region and which do not relate to nationally-advertised products, trade-marks or brand names. These signs are located within the State right of way and require a permit.

- TOD Signs are comprised of the following:

- Signs indicating a right turn off the Primary Highway;
- Signs indicating a left turn off the Primary Highway;
- Signs indicating that the advertised business is ahead on the Primary Highway. Ahead signs are only permitted when there are right/left turn TOD signs at the intersection, and the business is located not more than 5 miles from the intersection, and not beyond the next signed intersection.

- The selection of those

businesses to be included in the TOD program shall be based upon those qualified businesses closest to the intersection meeting other criteria established by the Department of Transportation.

- Location - TOD signs may be located at intersections on Primary Highways outside urbanized areas. TOD signs must take advantage of natural terrain, must have minimal impact on the scenic environment, and must avoid visual conflict with other signs, signals, or devices within the right of way. TOD signs are placed within the State right of way and require a permit.

- At any given intersection a maximum of twelve (12) TOD signs may be accommodated - four (4) facilities to the right; four (4) facilities to the left; and four (4) facilities straight ahead. Each business shall be limited to one (1) TOD, and an advance sign it necessary, for each direction of travel on a primary highway.

- An advertised facility must be within five miles from the highway containing the TOD. In very rare circumstances an advertised facility may be more than five miles, if the facility is of significant tourist interest, as determined by DOT.

- TOD Signs come in two sizes: (The size to be used will be determined by DOT)

- Standard - 24 inches by 15 inches - for normal two lane highways;
- Intermediate - 36 inches by 24 inches - for highways wider than two lanes

- Business owners shall furnish all necessary posts, back panels, and signs. Sign specifications (size, composition, color, support structure, etc.) must conform to State TOD requirements. Specifications will be provided to applicants after their application has been approved.

- Business owners shall be

responsible for the erection and maintenance, including all costs, of the TOD sign. If a TOD sign is damaged and the owner does not repair/replace the sign, the State may remove the TOD after 30 days.

- The TOD sign program is designed to be self-sustaining. The permit cost per sign is \$50.00 per year.

How to Apply

- Gather together the information you will need to discuss your sign needs with one of Department's staff and have an idea of where you would like the sign placed. Outside of New York City, call your DOT Regional Right of Way Office. Within New York City, please contact the New York City Department of Buildings.

- Contact your local municipal code enforcement official to check any local requirements.

- Based on these discussions, you will be asked to complete Forms ROW 375 and ROW 436, or you will be given information on how to apply for a Logo or TOD sign.

- Your request will be reviewed by the appropriate DOT staff, and you will be notified of its disposition as soon as possible.

For more information visit the NYSDOT Signs Program website at: <https://www.dot.ny.gov/programs/nys-signs/description>.

The information contained herein is provided for informational purposes only. It is not intended to be, nor should it be considered, a substitute for legal advice rendered by a competent attorney. If you have any questions about the application of the issues raised herein to your particular situation, seek the advice of a competent attorney.

Maple Producers Visit Ag and Markets



A number of maple producers recently traveled to the Department of Agriculture and Markets in Albany to support proposed regulations that would standardize maple grading among maple-producing states and Canadian provinces. Maple producers provided testimony to the Department on how a universal system for classifying maple syrup will make it easier for maple customers to understand what they are purchasing and help farms to better market their products.

Both the New York Farm Bureau and the New York Maple Producers Association support the proposed regulations. The President of the New York Maple Producers Association, Dwayne Hill, is seated second from the right in the front row. Eric Randall, Board Member for the International Maple Syrup Institute is seated to his left.

2013 Session Wraps Up in Albany With Major Win

Continued from Page 1

during the first week of June, I noted that New York farmers pay 15% of their net income towards property taxes, and in the last four years, average real property taxes paid per acre by farmers had gone up from \$26.00 to \$38.00 per acre – leaving New York farmers paying the second highest property tax rates in the nation behind only California. These stunning statistics compiled by Farm Credit East gave us more ammunition to make the case to the state Legislature that the time for immediate relief is now – especially as farmers are poised to see another dramatic 10% hike when they receive next fall's tax bills.

New York Farm Bureau Vice President Eric Ooms and Laurie Griffin from Saratoga County Farm Bureau came to Albany specifically for the press event even though it was a sunny day, all too unfortunately rare this rainy spring. VP Ooms said "Farming is important to my

family, ever since my parents emigrated from the Netherlands and started their own dairy. My brothers and I actively run the farm now, and the agricultural assessment rate increasing by 10% each year is a major cost barrier that will negatively impact our ability to keep our farm growing for our own kids."

Laurie Griffin, a sod farmer from Saratoga County, participated in the press event and said "For farms that are land intensive, the property tax is another piece of our expense puzzle. Lowering the cap will help give us an idea of where we are going to be, especially when fuel, labor, and other mandates keep increasing. Whether you are sending milk across state lines or I'm shipping sod, we are competing in a regional if not global market and anytime we level that playing field as much as possible, and property taxes are a part of that, is very important."

New York Farm Bureau

President Norton commended both Senator Ritchie, Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and Assemblymember Bill Magee, Chair of the Assembly Agriculture Committee, for making this legislation a priority for the committee and their respective houses. Bill Magee, who championed the cause in the Assembly and invited other members of the Assembly Ag Committee to the press event afterwards, said "New York farmers have seen alarming increases in their property taxes for farmland, and this bill addresses that". He also thanked his colleagues, both those from upstate and downstate for understanding the significance of the bill to keeping New York farmers farming. Assemblyman Blankenbush, ranking member on the Agriculture Committee, also spoke at the press event.

When the Senate passed the bill, Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Ritchie said "Land taxes are crushing

farmers, threatening to drive many right out of business, and making it harder to keep generations-old farms in the family". "That's why the Senate made reform a key part of our Grown in New York agriculture plan this year".

In a session that was replete with discouraging news about various bad behaviors of certain elected representatives, along with the frustrating passage, again, by the Assembly of the farmworker omnibus labor mandate bill, it was nice to finally end up with some significant policy achievements. The passage of this critically important pocketbook issue to our farm families cannot be emphasized enough, and farmers will be encouraged to weigh in often with Governor Cuomo to encourage him to sign the measure.

We will keep you up to date on any progress that is made. Be sure to visit NYFB.ORG to E-Lobby on this issue.

Inside D.C. :

Senate Makes Progress on Top Ag Priorities

By M. Kelly Young
kyoung@nyfb.org

Farmers are finally seeing progress in Washington, D.C., with the Senate moving forward in June with two top priorities: the Farm Bill and immigration reform.

The full Senate passed its version of the Farm Bill by an 84-15 vote on June 10. Both New York Senators Schumer and Gillibrand voted in favor of the bill. There were hundreds of amendments introduced, but the parties never reached an agreement on which to consider on the floor and they had the added pressure of limited debate time as leadership wanted to move on to the immigration debate.

As a result, only a handful of amendments were voted on and the bill is largely similar to the version passed last year by the body, cutting \$23 billion over 10 years. Of the cuts, \$4 billion came from SNAP, \$17 billion from commodities, and \$4 billion from conservation.

The House was scheduled to take up its version of the Farm Bill the week of June 17. In a monumental move, Speaker Boehner announced mid-June that he was committed

to moving the bill and will even vote for it himself despite any potential changes made on the floor. The Speaker has famously characterized the dairy program in the bill as "Soviet-style" and was rumored to have prevented the Farm Bill from reaching the floor last year because of the dairy provisions and his objection to the market stabilization provision, so this seeming turn-around indicates that he is ready to see the Farm Bill completed.

The bill approved by the Ag Committee cuts nearly \$40 billion over 10 years, half of that from SNAP, \$4.8 billion from conservation and \$18.6 billion from commodities. SNAP, the dairy safety net and reform of the sugar program were likely to be key issues of debate on the floor at press time.

In a very productive month for farmers, the Senate also began debating its comprehensive immigration reform bill (S. 744) the week of June 10 and this was expected to continue through the rest of the month. The Judiciary Committee process marking up the bill was called extremely open and democratic, taking up three

weeks of work with more than 300 amendments submitted and over 200 adopted from Senators in both parties. No major changes to the ag portion of the bill were accepted during the committee process. There are expected to be hundreds of amendments offered on the floor, all of which NYFB will be monitoring, and we will update you on any changes that impact the agriculture-related portions of the bill.

In the House, everyone is still waiting for the release of the Gang of Eight's comprehensive bill, which has been delayed several times and no one has committed to a release date. The good news, however, is that House leadership has put immigration reform on the agenda for July so we now have some expectation that the issue will see floor consideration before the August recess.

Canada Threaten Ag Trade Retaliation

The WTO trade dispute lodged by Canada and Mexico against the U.S. Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) program for beef and pork continues to rage. Despite the U.S. complying with the World

Trade Organization (WTO) dispute process and issuing a new COOL rule the end of May, neither of our neighbors are happy with the changes that were made.

In response, Canada has released its list of potential targets for trade retaliation if the U.S fails to bring COOL into what it considers acceptable WTO compliance. Before moving forward, any retaliatory tariffs would have to be authorized by WTO and both Canada and Mexico have stated their intent to request this authorization. The list announced by Canada includes items of interest to NY such as cows/beef, cheese, apples, cherries, corn, maple syrup, potatoes and wine. Mexico is expected to release a similar list shortly.

Farm Bureau policy support COOL as long as it is WTO compliant so we will be working with American Farm Bureau to encourage a compliant policy that maintains the tenets that farmers and consumers wanted in instituting this labeling program while protecting New York products from any kind of retaliatory tariffs.

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How Do Children Learn About Farming?

By Jo Ellen Saumier, District 7
Promotion and Education Committee

Old Mc Donald had a farm, ei,ei,o. And on that farm he had some cows, chicks, pigs, ducks, etc...

That's how I started learning about farming when I was a child. I soon learned that not all farms had cows and all the other animals. I was disappointed but understood that farms can still be farms with only one or a few kinds of animals. My farm education was enhanced by regular visits to my uncle's, formerly my grandfather's farm, and with daily summer walks down the road to see the neighbor farmer's baby pigs. I also visited friends who lived on a farm and got squirted with hot milk right out of the source. Building forts with hay bales and running through cow pastures trying to avoid the cow pies all added to my growing knowledge of farming. It was a gradual education filled with warm summer days and scheduling holiday meals around milking time.

As years went by, I learned that some farms didn't have any animals at all, other than maybe a dog or a cat. They grew crops. Things like peas and grains that were processed in large plants that we drove by as we went into a nearby city for events there. As a teen-ager, my friends and I always took really deep breaths as we drove by the whiskey distillery, where we knew the local grains had been delivered.

I learned about plants by working in the flower garden with my mother. She had a really green thumb and loved plants and working the soil. I don't think she really wanted to ever leave the farm where she was raised. The flowers, a tomato plant and a few rows of lettuce kept her tied to her roots.

All of this came back to me, as I participated in the Annual Agricultural Literacy events at area schools. In the two

classes where I read, one second grader said his family had chickens, one little girl admitted to having bunnies and two children lived near the woods. That was the extent of the farming experience for about 30 children in the rural area where I live.

How, I asked myself, are these children and all the others in New York State going to learn about the source of their food and how it is produced? In this day of electronic technology which children are exposed to from almost the moment of their birth, do they even know about Old McDonald?

Luckily there are signs of hope. Schools teachers are willing to invite volunteers into their classrooms for special activities related to farming and agriculture. The recent Agricultural Literacy events around the state are evidence of that. While interacting with the children, it was apparent that they were very open to learning about how their food is produced. It was obvious that school trips to farms and orchards had paid off. The children remembered what they had learned and seen and were quite happy to share what they had experienced. Reading and stories about agricultural activities and production helped to reinforce that learning.

Teachers around the State have also been participating in training sessions on how to use the Food, Land and People curriculum that has been developed to incorporate agriculture into the everyday lessons on math, literature, science, and the arts. The curriculum, designed for all ages and grades, blends easily into the state required teachings and comes with lesson plans, activities, and teaching aids. Information on the trainings is available for interested teachers and schools from www.agclassroom.org/ny/programs

There are other ways for children to learn about agriculture besides going to school. 4-H has been teaching children about farming and other subjects for over 50 years. Children do not have to live on a farm to participate and, in many cases, do

not even have to own an animal. There are general agricultural activities and specific ones, such as dairy, beef, horses, sheep, goats, poultry, rabbits, and, in certain areas, llamas and alpacas. Information on 4-H activities is available from the local 4-H program in the Cornell Cooperative Extension office.

Parents can encourage children to learn about agriculture by taking their children to area agricultural activities like the County Fair. There farms and 4-Hers demonstrate the results of their activities by having their products and animals exhibited and judged by experts. Children can go to the barns and watch animals being groomed for showing and watch the animals being judged. They may see animals being fed and dairy cows being milked. They may even learn to move quickly if they see an animal raise its tail!

Besides County Fairs, many County Farm Bureaus may hold A Day on the Farm or Open Farms where families can tour the farm and see how it operates. They can ask questions, see demonstrations and participate in activities that are scheduled. They may be able to sample products that are produced on the farm.

Farmers' markets are also a place that children can learn about their food and how it is produced. There the farmers are willing to talk with and answer questions about how they grow and harvest the food they have to sell. Children have an opportunity to see food that is fresh, touch and smell it, and sometimes, even taste it.

So, while most children in New York no longer live on a farm, they still have plenty of opportunities to learn about farming and agriculture. If agricultural organizations, schools and teachers, youth organizations, and parents work together, children can experience agriculture in a variety of ways. So, Old McDonald may not be needed anymore, because experience is really the best teacher.

Members Visit Legislator in Utica



Oneida County Farm Bureau President, Jake Schieferstine, along with Oneida County Farm Bureau board member, Mike Candella, visit with Assembly Brindisi (D-Utica) at a reception for the assemblyman at Aqua Vino in Utica. Schieferstine and Candella attended the event on behalf of the Farm NY PAC.

Oneida County Holds Annual Farm Fest



Jenny Mills and Oneida County Farm Bureau President, Jake Schieferstine get ready for the next wave of visitors to take part in a hay wagon tour of the Brabant Farm in Verona. The farm, owned by the vanLieshout family, was the host of this year's Farm Fest.

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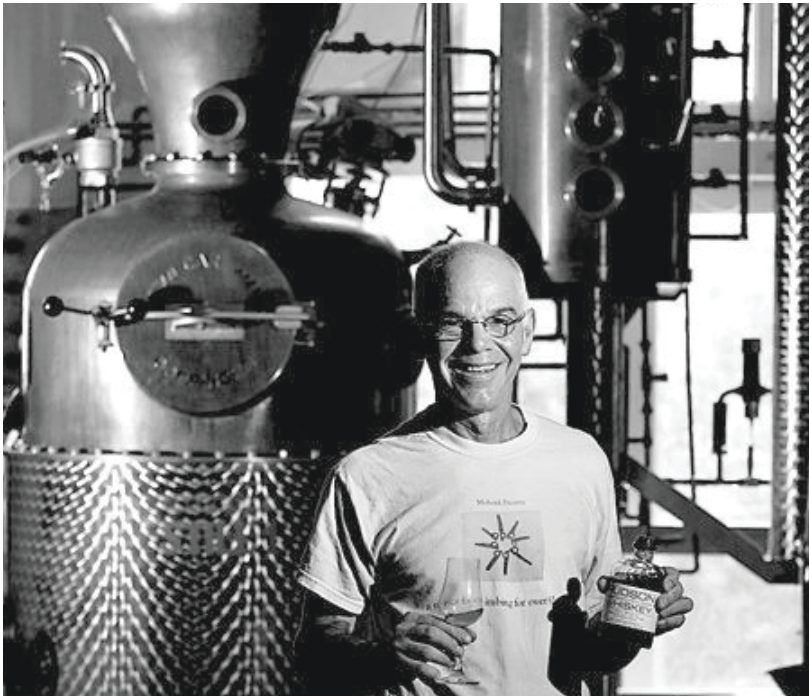
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The Face
of New York
Agriculture

Ralph Erenzo
Tuthilltown Spirits
Gardiner, NY

Tell us about your distillery operation.

We started the distillery in 2003, and first put products on the shelves in 2006. Together with my business partner Brian Lee, Tuthilltown Spirits produces a variety of whiskey, gin, vodka and cassis, largely all from New York grown agricultural fruit and grains. We recently struck a deal with William Grant and Sons, an international distillery and distributor, for our Hudson River Whiskey line. Grains and fruit from New York farmers are making their way to retail shelf stores in places like Paris,

London, Berlin, Barcelona and Switzerland, all over the place. We just were sent a picture from a bar in Vietnam. The story we like to tell people is that our products are New York agricultural goods going overseas, and representing us very well.

18 employees now. Started with just Brian and me and we did all the work. We are the majority of the company, we have 80%

Do you have family members or partners involved in the farm?

The distillery was started with my partner Brian Lee and myself, and we originally did all the work. We own 80% of the business now, but have 18 employees including my

son, Gable, and his wife Cathy. Gabe is the National Brand Ambassador for Hudson Whiskey and plays an integral part in our marketing, while his wife Cathy is our general right hand person and keeps the place running, along with doing all of our regulatory work.

Can you tell us a little about the history of your farm?

While I don't have a farm, I do lease the land that produces the crops used in our products. I provide seed for the grower, and pay the farmer for the time spent growing it for us. The crops we use are our crops, our goal is to be a true farm distillery. Even though we don't have the land to grow our own crops, I think it's a good deal for the New York grower.

What do you like best about being a farmer?

I like seeing our product on the shelf. I still get a real charge out of walking into a very high end restaurant or cocktail lounge in any major city and seeing our bottles, sitting right there on the shelf made in New York. It's unbelievable, in fact.

If there were one thing you could fix to make farming easier or more profitable, what would it be?

Apart from modernizing the alcoholic beverage

control law to make things easier, I would find a way to help develop supporting industries for the distilling and farming business. It isn't so much how many acres are in grains or fruit in New York, the next step is to find a way to develop the infrastructure. We need a grain treatment facility. We need to find a way to build a cooperage, so that there's a way to have barrels made in New York for distilling. We need to have adjunct or support businesses in New York, to support our artisanal beverage production.

People come to agriculture from all different backgrounds – what did you do?

Before opening up the distillery I was a professional rock climber living in Manhattan. Climbing was the perfect thing to prepare me for this life, as it requires tenacity and determination and facing big odds.

Why are you a member of NYFB?

Because NYFB takes an active posture in helping New York farmers and agriculture. What we do is agriculture. And NYFB helps support us.

USDA Offers Soil Health Assessment & Management Demonstration Twice Daily at 2013 Empire Farm Days

Seneca Falls, NY - Each day at 11am and 3pm at the August 6-8, 2013 Empire Farm Days, the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in cooperation with Cornell University's Soil Health Testing Lab and the New York Soil and Water Conservation Committee will provide soil health assessment and management demonstrations. The presentations will explain the services of the Soil Health Testing Lab, the principles of soil health management, and ways the qualities of soil can be changed through management to maximize a soil's inherent potential to grow crops. Visual demonstrations of soil runoff, percolation and aggregate stability will be conducted comparing soils managed using soil conservation practices compared to long

term conventional practices. The Soil Health Assessment and Management demonstrations will take place at the USDA NRCS Conservation Plant Garden located behind the USDA tent on West Seneca Avenue on the 300-acre showgrounds at Rodman Lott & Sons Farms in Seneca Falls, NY.

Twenty farm groups support the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Soil Health Initiative. The goal of the Initiative is to improve soil health for a more enduring, resilient and efficient agriculture based on the concept that soil and water conservation practices that improve soil health will have an impact on reducing soil erosion, while improving water quality and the capacity of soils to maintain productivity in the long term. These practices will

also improve the resiliency of soils to extreme and more variable weather events

Practices which impact soil health include reduced tillage, preferably long term no-till or zone till; residue management; diversity in rotations, including perennials where possible; cover cropping and keeping a living plant on the soil throughout the year; and the addition of organic matter.

Those attending the Empire Farm Days presentations will learn more and be able to ask questions about how they can maintain good soil health on their land.

The USDA Center tent at Empire Farms Day will have information exhibits and staff representing eight USDA agencies: Agricultural Research Service (ARS), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS),

Farm Services Agency (FSA), Finger Lakes National Forest (U.S. Forest Service), National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS), Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Rural Development, and the New York Federation of RC&D Councils.

Empire Farms Days covers 300 acres with 600-plus representatives of agricultural institutions and organizations; farm equipment and ATV test driving opportunities; DairyProfit Seminars and other educational workshops; demonstrations of live horse round pen training, cattle handling, small livestock care, and agricultural plastics recycling; farm safety and farm family displays; BBQ tents, and much more (www.empirefarmdays.com).

Join Farm Bureau For These Upcoming Events!

Valley Cats Local Farm and Ag Night

Come join the District 8 Counties in a night of fun at the Tri-City Valley Cats game. Field of Dreams Picnic tickets available for Farm Bureau members, group grandstand seating also available.

Date: 6/29/2013

Location: Joe Bruno Stadium
Troy, NY
6:00 PM

Soil Health Field Day

Event sponsored by Wayne County Farm Bureau. Demonstrations and presentation on soil health and cover crops. Cost \$5

Date: 7/11/2013

Start Time: 9:30 AM - 2:00 PM
Pit Farms
895 Lockpit Road.
Clyde, NY

Tractor Supply Agriculture Day

New York Farm Bureau will have an educational display, 4-H will also have a display and there will be a farmer's market.

Date: 7/28/2013

Start Time: 8:00 AM
TSC Glenmont

Greene County Youth Fair

Join us in educating the public on Agriculture and promoting youth and farming. Free admission and parking will be provided. The fair is 9 AM to 9 PM Daily.

Start Date: 7/25/2013 - 7/28/2013
Cairo, NY

Third Annual Grown on Long Island Day

Celebrate Grown on Long Island Day County-Wide Farmers Market. Featuring: local food & wine tasting, visit the farm animals, wagon rides, meet LI farmers, enjoy, LI roasted corn, food drive for Island Harvest, explore a century-old working farm, and Kids Food Challenge. For more information visit www.grownonlongisland.com or call 631.727.3777.

Date: 8/9/2013

Time: 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Suffolk County Farm
350 Yaphank Avenue
Yaphank, NY

12th Annual Foundation Golf Classic

NYFB Fundraising Golf Classic with registration at 10:30 and Shotgun Tee/Scramble Format at 12:40. \$175 includes all meals, awards, cart, green fees, etc. Call 1-800-342-4143 to make your reservation and support Ag Education!

Start Date: 9/10/2013

Time: 10:30 AM - 7:30 PM
En-Joie Golf Course
Endicott, NY

A Taste of Rensselaer

The evening will begin with a cocktail hour followed by a dinner prepared from local products. The featured chef is Luca Brunelle, Executive Chef of Brown's Brewing Company. Ticket cost is \$30 per person for any Farm Bureau Member, non-member cost is \$40 per person.

Start Date: 9/12/2013

Time: 5:30 PM - 8:00 PM
Goold Orchards
1297 Brookview Station Rd.
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HAY AND STRAW. Small squares. Prices vary. 518-461-3779

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balls NH baler twine (plastic) 210-6500' -210# \$25 each; 8 bales (2 balls each) NH natural fiber -9000' -130# \$30 each. Will sell all above for \$7500 cash or good check. John 585-548-2434 after 7am.

1964 BROCKWAY road tractor model 260. Single axle, gas, used until summer 2012. Looks great. Good show truck or yard jockey. Many spare parts available. \$2800 obo. 315-243-5068

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